Comments: **Please fill out, fold, stamp, & send**

From:

Bureau of Reclamation
Albuquerque Area Office
555 Broadway NE, Ste. 100
Albuquerque, NM 87102-2352

Attention: Ms. Marsha Carra, EIS Team Leader

Printed on Recycled Paper

Bureau of Reclamation
Albuquerque Area Office

State of New Mexico
Interstate Stream Commission

RIVER NOTES

A Newsletter of the Carlsbad Project Water Operations & Water Supply Conservation EIS
April 2004

Carlsbad EIS Alternatives Outlined

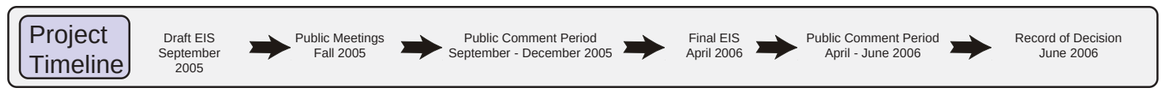
The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission (NMISC) are pleased to announce that final alternatives have been selected for further analysis in the Carlsbad Project Water Operations and Water Supply Conservation Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The final alternatives are aimed at meeting the needs of the Pecos bluntnose shiner, a federally threatened species, as well as downstream water users. The EIS will address the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the re-operation of Sumner Dam and implementation of a water acquisition program in the Pecos River Basin. This project is needed to enable Reclamation to comply with the Endangered Species Act by conserving the Pecos bluntnose shiner through re-operation of Sumner Dam, while also conserving Carlsbad Project water supply through implementation of a water acquisition program. Since changes to water operations designed to conserve the Pecos bluntnose shiner will result in additional net depletions to the Pecos River system, depletions to the Carlsbad Project water supply will need to be offset by water acquired by Reclamation.

The Alternatives Workgroup developed these final alternatives in collaboration with the Hydrology, Biology, Water Offset Options Group (WOOG), and agency management. Over twenty-five alternatives were initially compiled by the Alternatives Workgroup. Screening criteria developed by the Biology and Hydrology Workgroups were used to eliminate or retain alternatives for further consideration. Since the purpose of the WOOG is to develop offset options, which are common to all alternatives, the WOOG felt it inappropriate to develop screening criteria for the alternatives. The final alternatives (Table 1) represent a reasonable range of alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the proposed federal action and provide management flexibility for implementation. These alternatives focus on flow targets and ranges at either the Acme or Taiban gage, and the frequency, duration, and timing of irrigation block releases intended to avoid adverse impact to the Pecos bluntnose shiner. The final alternatives incorporate certain actions common to all, such as offsetting all depletions through priorities developed by the WOOG, establishing a conservation pool to supplement flows and maintain riverine habitat, and providing provisions for ongoing agreements to monitor and manage operations. Other conservation actions such as developing wells to supplement flows in the short-term, removing non-native riparian vegetation, and channel restoration projects will be considered by appropriate agencies. Some of these actions may require additional project-specific environmental analyses and public involvement processes.

We're on the Web!

For the most up-to-date information, go to our Web Site at:

http://www.usbr.gov/uc/albuq/library/eis/carlsbad/carlsbad.html



Water Offset Options Weighed

The Water Offset Options Group (WOOG) has considered over eighty options for offsetting anticipated depletions to Carlsbad Project water supply. Some of these include the purchase or lease of water rights combined with land retirement, fallowing, or well field development. Other options will include managing and conserving supplies through channel and canal lining, evaporation suppression, vegetation removal, on farm conservation measures, changes in crop patterns and watershed management. Offset options have been prioritized based on cost, amount, location of offset source, salvage risk, political risk, offset timing, realization time, implementation time, sustainability, and effect on stateline flows. The WOOG is currently evaluating these same options on their ability to provide wet water for the Pecos bluntnose shiner and its critical habitat. The most viable of these options will be identified and their potential effects on the human and natural environment evaluated in the EIS. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide Reclamation with a flexible toolkit to ensure that depletions to Carlsbad Project water supply are offset and water sources to help conserve the Pecos bluntnose shiner are identified.

Carlsbad Water Operations EIS Progress

In addition to finalizing the EIS alternatives, the workgroups and resource specialists have continued to gather data relevant to resources that may be impacted and will be addressed in the EIS and also to refine models to be used in the environmental analyses. Internal drafts of the affected environment section for each of the resources have been written and are being edited. The WOOG continues its work in defining and prioritizing options to offset depletions. Upon completion and internal review of the Draft Affected Environment section, analysis of the impacts of each of the alternatives will be conducted. The impact analysis will include direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of each of the alternatives. Direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. Indirect effects are reasonably foreseeable but would occur later in time or farther removed in distance. Cumulative impacts are impacts that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions. The Draft EIS is scheduled for printing and distribution to the public in September 2005.

Public Participation Requested

Public participation is a key component of the EIS process. Please use the mailer provided or call or e-mail your comments. The Bureau of Reclamation point of contact for the EIS is Ms. Marsha Carra (505) 462-3602, mcarra@uc.usbr.gov. The New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission point of contact is Ms. Sara Rhoton (505) 827-3996, srhoton@ose.state.nm.us.

The Draft EIS is currently scheduled for completion in Fall of 2005. When completed, copies of the Draft EIS will be made available for public review and public meetings will be held to answer questions and obtain verbal comments.

Long-Term Miscellaneous Purposes Contract EIS

A separate EIS is being prepared concurrently by the NMISC and Reclamation that addresses the effects of entering into a long-term contract with the Carlsbad Irrigation District for the conversion and delivery of irrigation water for purposes other than irrigation. Since this action is proceeding independently and on a different schedule than the Carlsbad Water Operations EIS, it has a separate public involvement process. If you are interested in learning more about this EIS or commenting on this action, please contact Ms. Sara Rhoton (505) 827-3996, srhoton@ose.state.nm.us or Ms. Marsha Carra (505) 462-3602, mcarra@uc.usbr.gov.

Review Committee Established

On March 3rd, 2004, the Reclamation Area Manager and the NMISC Engineer held a meeting to form the EIS review committee. The establishment of the review committee is a provision of the Memorandum of Agreement for the Carlsbad Project Water Operations and Water Supply Conservation Environmental Impact Statement. Its purpose is to facilitate project coordination and information exchange, and to review important EIS documentation. The review committee may make recommendations to the executive committee with respect to the EIS process, but has no decision-making role. In addition to the Reclamation Area Manager and the NMISC Engineer, each of the EIS cooperating agencies has been invited to send a representative to participate on the review committee. During the meeting, the attendees were provided with an update on the progress of the EIS, a presentation on the alternatives, and the opportunity to comment and ask questions. Future meetings will be scheduled as needed by the executive committee. Any member of the review committee can also request that the review committee convene.

Table 1
EIS Alternatives

Alternative	Range of Flows by Water Year Type[1] {---- Dry ---}		{---- Average ---}		{---- Wet----}		Block Releases				Habitat Restoration, Improvements and Other Elements	
	Winter Target	Summer Target	Winter Target	Summer Target	Winter Target	Summer Target	Duration	Frequency	Magnitude	Ramp Down	Delivery	Time of Year	Habitat Restoration & Improvements	Conservation Pool
Taiban Constant Alternative	35 cfs @ Taiban	35 cfs @ Taiban, Use pumps to prevent intermittency @ Acme	35 cfs @ Taiban	35 cfs @ Taiban, Use pumps to prevent intermittency @ Acme	35 cfs @ Taiban	35 cfs @ Taiban, Use pumps to prevent intermittency @ Acme	15 day max	On C/D demand, but space out as long as possible	On C/D demand	None	Maximum Efficiency	On C/D demand – avoid releases during 6 weeks around August 1st	Measures to be developed common to all alternatives.	Conservation Pool to be developed and maintained.
Taiban Variable Alternative	35 cfs @ Taiban	45 cfs, -5, +10 @ Taiban.	35 cfs @ Taiban	45 cfs, -5, +10 @Taiban	35 cfs @ Taiban	45 cfs, -5, +10 @ Taiban	15 day max	On C/D demand, but space out as long as possible	On C/D demand	None	Maximum Efficiency	On C/D demand – avoid releases during 6 weeks around August 1st	Measures to be developed common to all alternatives.	Conservation Pool to be developed and maintained.
Acme Constant Alternative	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	15 day max	On C/D demand, but space out as long as possible	On C/D demand	None	Maximum Efficiency	On C/D demand – avoid releases during 6 weeks around August 1st	Measures to be developed common to all alternatives.	Conservation Pool to be developed and maintained.
Acme Variable Alternative	35 cfs Acme	12 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	24 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	48 cfs Acme	15 day max	On C/D demand, but space out as long as possible	On C/D demand	None	Maximum Efficiency	On C/D demand – avoid releases during 6 weeks around August 1st	Measures to be developed common to all alternatives.	Conservation Pool to be developed and maintained.
Critical Habitat Alternative	35 cfs Taiban Minimum	Critical Habitat Kept Wet; Avoid Intermittency @ Acme	35 cfs Taiban Minimum	5 cfs Acme	35 cfs Taiban Minimum	10 cfs Acme	15 day max	On C/D demand, but space out as long as possible	On C/D demand	None	Maximum Efficiency	On C/D demand – avoid releases during 6 weeks around August 1st	Measures to be developed common to all alternatives.	Conservation Pool to be developed and maintained.
No Action (Current Operations, 2003-2006 Biological Opinion)	35 cfs Acme	Upper Critical Habitat Kept Wet; Avoid Intermittency @ Acme	35 cfs Acme	20 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	35 cfs Acme	15 day max at peak. 65 days per year.	Space out to 14 + days apart	None	None	Maximum Efficiency	May 1 - Sept 1		

[1] Water year type is defined by the total volume of water in storage at Santa Rosa Reservoir, Sumner Lake, and Brantley Reservoir at given times throughout the year. Dry is defined as the total of the reservoirs having less than 75,000 AF; average is 75,000 to 110,000 AF; and wet is storage greater than 110,000 AF.